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PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE STATISTICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

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January 19, 1835.

Lieut.-Col. SYKES, F.R.S., Vice-President, in the Chair.

John Buckle, Edwin Chadwick, and John Elliot Drinkwater,
Esquires, were appointed Auditors.

The reading of Mr. Jacob's paper on the collection, &c. of Statistical knowledge, was resumed and concluded.

The author begins by observing that few persons are to be found at the present day, who will hesitate in allowing that the best mode of allaying disquietude and of diffusing contentment on the subject of public affairs, is an open and clear disclosure of their condition and management ; and this he considers the more necessary in a country like Great Britain than in any other, inasmuch as it has become a right of the public to receive every kind of information which can lead to a correct judgment of the capacity, assiduity, and integrity of those who administer the government of the State. As a great and an important preliminary step towards attaining an accurate knowledge of our condition, Mr. Jacob adduces the institution of the decennial census, which effectually put an end to the controversies previously carried on by adverse parties on the question of whether our population was in a declining or an increasing state ; and he is of opinion that a general dissemination of the knowledge of many other facts would not fail to produce equally satisfactory results.*

* It should be observed, that the institution of the Statistical department at the Board of Trade, has supplied many deficiencies which had previously existed in the details of our official records.

The author then proceeds to sketch the outline of a plan calculated to facilitate the accumulation and classification of ascertained facts connected with those branches of government which are most deserving of attention and inquiry. The chief of these are the Stamp, Tax, Excise and Post offices, and the Customs. He enters at length into the details connected with each, and in his enumeration of our chief staple commodities, under the head of Customs, gives a brief historic retrospect of the gradual progress they have severally made from a state of comparative insignificance in earlier times, to one of extraordinary magnitude in our own. He regrets that in the census of 1831 the number of houses was not enumerated as in the three preceding censuses, which shewed from each period to the next a regular increase ; and suggests that in the absence of this specific statement, it might afford some assistance to refer to the particulars of the house-tax in each year collected by the tax-office, adding that the tax on tiles and bricks would corroborate the result. The building of houses he considers to be as much a manufacture as any other branch that can be more specifically defined, and one which, in its increase, has kept pace with the increase of all other means of creating wealth. The number and tonnage of ships are so accurately registered, that Mr. Jacob does not think any suggestions necessary on the subject ; but in regard to timber, he thinks it would be very desirable to know what proportion the timber, the production of our own soil, used in building ships and houses, bears to that which is imported from other countries, whether our own colonies or the territories of foreign powers.

In speaking of corn, Mr. Jacob observes, that the quantity imported from abroad will shew the difference between our production and consumption in a series of years of deficient harvests when they occur ; but the quantity grown, and the excess in those years in which our harvests are superabundant are unknown ; and he laments our being equally unacquainted with the other agricultural products of the kingdom, such as meat, tallow, butter, cheese, hemp, flax, &c., and the smaller valuable articles which are obtained from our rural industry. During the continuance of the tax on salt, much valuable information was derived respecting fisheries, salt being delivered to the fishermen free of duty on their entering into bonds which were cancelled on the

fishermen producing salted fish in proportion to the quantity of salt they had received. The extent of the herring fishery can only now be learnt from the number and tonnage of the vessels equipped at Yarmouth and other places. The returns of all that relates to our colonial possessions are so amply communicated to the colonial department, that sufficient materials must be found there to supply most of the information that can be required concerning their progressive and actual state.

Having hitherto paid attention only to those several sources from which the wealth of the country is mainly derived, the Author next proceeds briefly to notice the reverse, and communicates some observations relative to the acquisition of accurate knowledge respecting each of the larger branches of the public expenditure and the several classes of individuals composing the community, as well as the best means of obtaining correct accounts of those large sources of wealth, which are wholly, or in a great measure, exempt from all financial control and supervision.

In conclusion, Mr. Jacob observes that few results are more desirable to arrive at, than some valuation which could be relied on, of the wealth, personal and real of the kingdom. The effect of it would be that a comparison might then be made between the amount so obtained and the National Debt, which is indeed but a charge on the whole property of the community, including the funds themselves, in favour of a part of the same community.

The beneficial results to be hoped for from the adoption of some such general system of inquiry as has been recommended, would be that it might contribute to the diffusion of accurate knowledge respecting the actual state of the nation.

A paper forming an Analysis of Signor Quadri's work, entitled, "Prospetto Statistico delle Provincie Venete," by John Elliot Drinkwater, Esq., Secretary, was then begun.
